

R.F. Kennedy Pushes Cuban Prisoner Deal

U.S. Says Other Officials Help, But Release Would Be Due To Private Efforts

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Drugs and food to ransom prisoners are loaded on Cuba-bound ship

Washington, Dec. 20 (AP)—The Justice Department put it on record in a formal statement today that Robert F. Kennedy, Attorney General, and many other Government officials have helped in efforts to gain release of the Cuban invasion prisoners. But it said if they are freed it will be due to private efforts.

The statement made no mention of why it was issued, but a spokesman said in answer to questions that it was a reply to published reports that Robert Kennedy has been the master mind for the ransom move.

Full Details Asked

The spokesman said such reports jeopardize the effort, in effect adopting the view stated by others in the Administration that Fidel Castro's price might go up if he believed he was dealing with the United States Government.

Meanwhile, a Republican congressman called today on President Kennedy to make public full details on any agreement for release of the prisoners so the American people would know

whether it is "an honorable agreement or a capitulation to the Communist Government in Cuba."

Representative Ford of Michigan made public a letter to the President asking answers to these questions:

1. Who will pay the cost of medical and other supplies being exchanged for prisoners and the cost of transporting the goods?

2. What is their cash value?

Question On Companies

3. What companies are making the goods available to the American Red Cross for the exchange?

4. Has the Administration given any inducement to these companies—for example, by allowing them to make up the cost of goods and services through tax credit, Government loans, contracts, or other special considerations?

The Justice Department statement said:

"The important thing that must be kept in mind is the release of 1,113 brave men who have suffered greatly but never lost their

courage nor their devotion to freedom.

"If the negotiations now being concluded by Mr. James Donovan of the Cuban Families Committee are successful, it will be due to his efforts, those of his advisory committee headed by Gen. Lucius Clay, a number of volunteers, and the work of the American Red Cross. American businesses and labor unions have responded generously and unselfishly to this humanitarian cause.

"The President has made no secret of the Government's sympathetic concern for the committee's efforts. The Attorney General, together with many other Government officials, has sought to help the committee achieve its objective.

"Lawyers from the Department of Justice, the Internal Revenue Service and other Government agencies have been available on an around-the-clock basis to assist manufacturers with tax and anti-trust problems which have arisen in connection with their donations and to expedite necessary Governmental rulings and decisions related to charitable deductions and cooperative activities."